DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 056 UD 030 887

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TITLE Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-19-509898-6
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 231p.
AVAILABLE FROM Oxford University Press, Inc., 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016 ($23).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Culture; Black History; Blacks; *Civil Rights; *Disadvantaged Youth; Family Characteristics; Inner City; *Males; Profiles; *Racial Identification; Racial Relations; Religious Cultural Groups
IDENTIFIERS Malcolm X; Michigan (Detroit); National Association Advancement Colored People; *Rap Music; Simpson (OJ) Murder Trial

ABSTRACT

The essays in this collection explore black culture from the perspective of an author who went from a childhood in inner-city Detroit (Michigan) to become an ordained minister, university professor, and cultural critic. The book opens with a letter to the author's brother, in jail for murder, and examines their childhoods and the role of the author's stepfather in the brothers' upbringing. A section entitled "Testimonials: The Joys and Concerns of Black Men's Lives" provides meditations on the O. J. Simpson trial and on the lives of Gardner Taylor, Michael Jordan, Sam Cooke, Brent Staples, and Marion Barry. The second section, "Lessons: Politics of/and Identity," explores: (1) civil rights; (2) the influence of Malcolm X; (3) the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); (4) the contributions of Carol Moseley-Braun; (5) race and the myth of Black purity; (6) relations between Blacks and Jews; (7) the Black family; and (8) the Black Panthers. A section entitled "Songs of Celebration" presents profiles of Black Americans, especially those noted in popular culture, and several analyses of Black music and gangsta rap. The conclusion is a letter to the author's wife that traces much of his development and cultural beliefs. (SLD)

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